Wilson's Arte of Rhetorique

1560

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A Prologue to the *Reader.*

GREAT may their boldneſſe bee thought, that ſeeke without feare to ſett foorth their knowledge: & ſuffer their doinges to be ſene, they care not of whom. For, not onely thereby doe they bring men to thinke, that they ſtand much in their owne conceipt, but alſo they ſeeme to aſſure themſelues, that all men will like whatſoeuer they write. Wherein they commit two great faults: the one is, that they are proud: the other is, that they are fond. For, what greater pride can there be, then for any man to thinke himſelf to be wiſer, then all men liuing? Or what greater folly can be immagined, then for one to thinke, that all men will like, whatſoeuer he writeth? Such are they for the moſt part by all likelihood, that doe ſet forth Bookes. Wherein they doe both betray them ſelues, and alſo giue great occaſion to the world, to talke largely of them. But al thoſe that doe write, are not ſuch as I ſay, nor meane not as I thinke, as the which are wiſe and learned men, writing onely vnder the correction of others, to edifie their neighbour, and not ſeeking in any wiſe their own glorie. Neither all that bee Readers will talke their pleaſures, but rather ſtay their iudgements, and weye things with reaſon. Some perhappes may like the writer, if his doinges bee good, but the moſt part vndoubtedly muſt of force bee offended, as the which are corrupt of iudgement, becauſe they are nought. Then ſuch as ſeeke the greateſt praiſe for writing of Bookes, ſhould do beſt in my ſimple minde to write fooliſh toyes, for then the moſt part would beſt eſteeme them. And herein perhappes may I get ſome aduauntage, that in my yong yeares, haue bene bold to ſet forth my ſimple fantaſies. For, in follie, I dare compare with the proudeſt, and in pride I dare match with him that is moſt fooliſh: not doubting to finde ſuch fellowes, that not onely will ſeeke to be egall vnto me, and perhappes excell me, but alſo ſuch as will therein right well eſteeme me.

A Prologue to the Reader.

Cicero in his ſecond Booke *de Oratore*, bringeth in one *Lucilius*, a pleaſaunt and merie conceipted man, who ſaith, that he would not haue ſuch thinges as he wrote to bee read, either of thoſe that were excellently learned, or of them that were altogether ignoraunt. For, that the one would thinke more of his doinges, and haue a farther meaning with him, then euer the aucthour ſelfe thought: the other taking the booke in his hand, would vnderſtand nothing at all, being as meete to reade Aucthours, as an Aſſe to play on the Organnes. This man in thus ſaying, had ſome reaſon. But I being ſomewhat acquainted with the world, haue found out an other ſort of men, whom of all others, I would bee loth ſhould reade any of my doinges: eſpecially ſuch things as either touched Chriſt, or any good doctrine. And thoſe are ſuch malicious folke, that loue to finde faults in other mens matters, and ſeuen yeares together wil keepe them in ſtore, to the vtter vndoing of their Chriſtian brother: not minding to reade for their better learning, but ſeeking to depraue whatſoeuer they finde, and watching their time, will take beſt aduauntage to vndoe their neighbour. Such men I ſay of all others, would I be loth to haue the ſight, of any myne earneſt doinges, if I could tell how to forbid them, or how to hinder them of their purpoſe.

Two yeares paſt at my beeing in *Italie*, I was charged in *Roome* Towne, to my great daunger and vtter vndoing (if Gods goodneſſe had not bin the greater) to haue written this Booke of *Rhetorique*, & the *Logicke* alſo, for the which I was coumpted an Hereticke, notwithſtanding the abſolution, graunted to al the Realme, by *Pope Iulie* the third, for al former offences or practiſes, deuiſed againſt the holie mother Church, as they call it. A ſtraunge matter, that thinges done in England ſeuen yeres before, and the ſame vniuerſally forgiuen, ſhould afterwards be layd to a mans charge in *Roome*. But what cannot malice doe? Or what will not the wilfull deuiſe, to ſatiſfie their mindes, for vndoing of others? God be my Iudge, I had then as little feare (although death was preſent, and the torment at hand, wherof I felt ſome ſmart) as euer I had in all my life before. For, when I ſaw thoſe that did ſeeke my death, to bee ſo maliciouſly ſet, to make ſuch poore ſhifts for my readier diſpatch, and to burden me with thoſe

thoſe backe reckeninges: I tooke ſuch courage, and was ſo bolde, that the Iudges then did much maruaile at my ſtoutneſſe, and thinking to bring doune my great heart, told me plainly, that I was in farther perill, then wherof I was aware, and ſought therupon to take aduauntage of my words, and to bring me in daunger by all meanes poſſible. And after long debating with me, they willed me at any hand to ſubmit my ſelfe to the holy Father, and the deuout Colledge of Cardinalles. For otherwiſe there was no remedie. With that beeing fully purpoſed, not to yeeld to any ſubmiſſion, as one that little truſted their colourable deceipt: I was as ware as I could bee, not to vtter any thing for mine owne harme, for feare I ſhoulde come in their daunger. For then either ſhould I haue dyed, or els haue denyed both openly and ſhamefully, the knowne trueth of Chriſt and his Goſpell. In the ende by Gods grace, I was wonderfully deliuered, through plain force of the worthie *Romaines* (an enterpriſe heretofore in that ſort neuer attempted) being then without hope of life, and much leſſe of libertie. And now that I am come home, this booke is ſhewed me, and I deſired to looke vpon it, to amend it where I thought meet. Amend it, quoth I? Nay, let the booke firſt amende it ſelfe, and make mee amendes. For ſurely I haue no cauſe to acknowledge it for my booke, becauſe I haue ſo ſmarted for it. For where I haue beene euill handled, I haue much a doe to ſhewe my ſelf friendly. If the Sonne were the occaſion of the Fathers impriſonment, would not the Father bee offended with him thinke you? Or at the leaſt, would he not take heede how hereafter he had to doe with him? If others neuer get more by bookes then I haue done: it were better be a Carter, then a Scholer, for wordly profite. A burnt child feareth the fire, and a beaten dogge eſcheweth the whippe. Now therefore, I will none of this booke from henceforth, I will none of him I ſay: take him that liſt, and weare him that will. And by that time they haue paid for him ſo dearely as I haue done, they will bee as wearie of him as I haue beene. Who that toucheth Pitch ſhall be filed with it, and he that goeth in the Sunne ſhall bee Sunne burnt, although he thinke not of it. So they that wil reade this or ſuch like bookes, ſhall in the ende be as the bookes are. What goodneſſe is in this treatiſe,

I cannot without vainglorie report, neither will I meddle with it, either hot or colde. As it was, ſo it is, and ſo bee it ſtill hereafter for mee: ſo that I heare no more of it, and that it be not yet once again caſt in my diſh. But this I ſay to others, as I am aſſured they will laugh that will reade it: So if the world ſhould turne (as God forbid) they were moſt like to weepe, that in all pointes would followe it. I would bee loth that any man ſhould hurt himſelfe for my doinges. And therefore to auoyde the worſt for all parts, the beſt were neuer once to looke on it: for then I am aſſured no man ſhal take harme by it. But I thinke ſome ſhal reade it, before whom I doe waſh my handes, if any harme ſhould come to them hereafter, & let them not ſay but that they are warned. I neuer heard a man yet troubled for ignoraunce in Religion. And yet me thinkes it is as great an hereſie not to know God, as to erre in the knowledge of God. But ſome perhaps may ſay vnto me: Sir, you are much to be blamed that are ſo fearfull, and doe caſt ſuch perrilles before hande, to diſcourage men from well doing. I aunſwere: My minde is not to diſcourage any man, but only to ſhewe how I haue beene tried for this bookes ſake, *tanquam per ignem.* For in deede the Priſon was on fire when I came out of it, and where as I feared fire moſt (as who is he that doth not feare it?) I was deliuered by fire and ſworde together. And yet now thus fearfull am I, that hauing beene thus ſwinged, and reſtrained of libertie: I would firſt rather haſſard my life preſently hereafter to dye vpon a Turke: then to abide againe without hope of libertie, ſuch painfull impriſonment for euer. So that I haue now got courage with ſuffering damage, and my ſelfe as you ſee, very willing from henceforth to dye: being then brought only but in feare of death. They that loue ſorrowe vpon ſorrowe: God ſend it them. I for my part had rather bee without ſence of griefe, then for euer to liue in griefe. And I thinke the troubles before death being long ſuffered, and without hope continued are worſe a great deale, then preſent death it ſelfe can bee: Eſpecially to him that maketh litle accompt of this life, and is wel armed with a conſtant mind to Godward. Thus I haue talked of my ſelf more then I needed, ſome will ſay, and yet not more (may I well ſay) then I haue needed in deede. For I was without all helpe,

and

and without all hope, not onely of libertie, but alſo of life, and therefore what thing needed I not? Or with what wordes ſufficiently could I ſet forth my neede? God be praiſed, and thankes be giuen to him onely, that not onely deliuered me out of the Lyons mouth, but alſo hath brought England my deare Countrey, out of great thraldome and forraine bondage.

And God ſaue the Queenes Maieſtie, the Realme, and the ſcattered flocke of Chriſt, and graunt, O mercifull God, an vniuerſall quietneſſe of minde, perfect greement in doctrine, and amendment of our liues, that we may be all one Sheepefolde, and haue one Paſtour Ieſus, to whom with the Father, the Sonne, and the holy Ghoſt, bee all honour and glorie worlde without ende. *Amen.*

This ſeuenth of
December.
1560.